

## IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 29, 32, 34, 36, and 39, and add new Claims 55-60 to read as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An ink jet printing apparatus capable of performing a preliminary ejecting operation that does not contribute to printing, said apparatus comprising:

a print head having an ejecting portion,

wherein an amount of ink ejected through said ejecting portion varies depending on the amount of time during which printing is not executed, and ~~wherein an ejection is performed through said ejecting portion only one or two times, selectively, in one preliminary ejecting operation, the preliminary ejecting operation being performed on a print medium if the print medium lies in a printing position relative to said print head and the preliminary ejecting operation~~ a first preliminary ejecting operation and a second preliminary ejecting operation are performed,

the first preliminary ejecting operation being performed on a print medium if the print medium lies in a printing position relative to said print head, wherein an ejection is performed through said ejecting portion of substantially only one or two ink droplets, selectively, in one preliminary ejecting operation, and

the second preliminary ejecting operation, in which an ejection amount of the second preliminary ejecting operation in one preliminary ejecting operation is greater than that of the first preliminary ejecting operation, being performed on an object other than the print

medium if the amount of ink decreases below a normal value before the print medium reaches the printing position.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said second preliminary ejecting operation is performed ~~when~~ in the case that said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion is decreased below a normal value.

4. (Currently Amended) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 3 wherein said second preliminary ejecting operation is performed between the time when said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion starts to decrease below said normal value and the time when said amount of ink recovers to said normal value.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein, if the print medium lies in the printing position when the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed, the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed on the print medium only if dots formed on the print medium may be unnoticeable compared to a printed image, and wherein said second preliminary ejecting operation is performed on an object other than the print medium if dots may be noticeable.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein one of said first and second preliminary ejecting operations is operation is performed ~~when in the case that~~ a predetermined time has elapsed after a last ejection, said predetermined time including a time during which said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion is decreased significantly.

9. (Original) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 8 wherein said predetermined time is determined depending on a temperature condition and a humidity condition of said printing apparatus.

10. (Previously Presented) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 8 wherein said print head has a plurality of ejecting portions, and wherein said predetermined time is determined for each of said ejecting portions.

11. (Currently Amended) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 10 wherein said predetermined time for each of said ejecting portions is corrected using dithering, error diffusions, or random numbers so that a dot pattern formed during one of said first and second preliminary ejecting operations operation for said plurality of ejecting portions is unnoticeable compared to a printed image.

12. (Currently Amended) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 8 further comprising:

a table used to determine said predetermined time and ejecting numbers for one of said first and second preliminary ejecting operations operation, and

a control device for controlling said one of said first and second preliminary ejecting operations operation, said control device using said table to perform said one of said first and second preliminary ejecting operations operation.

13. (Original) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said print head includes an electrothermal converting element, said print head ejecting ink using thermal energy generated by said electrothermal converting element.

14. (Original) The ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said print head includes a piezoelectric element, said print head ejecting ink using mechanical energy generated by said piezoelectric element.

15-28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A preliminary ejecting method for an ink jet printing apparatus comprising a print head having an ejecting portion, ~~said~~ the apparatus being capable of performing a preliminary ejecting operation that does not contribute to printing, wherein an

amount of ink ejected through said the ejecting portion varies depending on the amount of time during which printing is not executed, said method comprising the step steps of:

~~executing an ejection through the ejecting portion only one or two times,~~  
~~selectively, in one preliminary ejecting operation, the preliminary ejecting operation being~~  
~~performed on a print medium if the print medium lies in a printing position relative to the print~~  
~~head and the preliminary ejecting operation~~

performing a first preliminary ejecting operation on a print medium if the print medium  
lies in a printing position relative to the print head, wherein an ejection is performed through the  
ejecting portion of substantially only one or two ink droplets, selectively, in one preliminary  
ejecting operation, and

performing a second preliminary ejecting operation, in which an ejection amount of the  
second preliminary ejecting operation in one preliminary ejecting operation is greater than that of  
the first preliminary ejecting operation, being performed on an object other than the print  
medium if the amount of ink decreases below a normal value before the print medium reaches  
the printing position.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Previously Presented) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 29 wherein said one or two ejections are performed when said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion is decreased below a normal value.

32. (Currently Amended) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 31 wherein said second preliminary ejecting operation is performed between the time when said amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion starts to decrease below said normal value and the time when said amount of ink recovers to said normal value.

33. (Canceled)

34. (Currently Amended) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 29 wherein, if the print medium lies in the printing position when the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed, the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed on the print medium only if dots formed on the print medium may be unnoticeable compared to a printed image, and wherein the second preliminary ejecting operation is performed on an object other than the print medium if dots may be noticeable.

35. (Canceled)

36. (Currently Amended) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 29 wherein one of said first and second preliminary ejecting operations is ~~operation is~~ performed when a predetermined time has elapsed after a last ejection, said predetermined time including a time during which the amount of ink passing through said ejecting portion is decreased significantly.

37. (Original) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 36 wherein said predetermined time is determined depending on a temperature condition and a humidity condition of said printing apparatus.

38. (Previously Presented) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 36 wherein said print head has a plurality of ejecting portions, and wherein said predetermined time is determined for each of said ejecting portions.

39. (Currently Amended) The preliminary ejecting method according to claim 38 wherein said predetermined time for each of said ejecting portions is corrected using dithering, error diffusions, or random numbers so that a dot pattern formed during one of said first and second preliminary ejecting operations ~~operation~~ for said plurality of ejecting portions is unnoticeable compared to a printed image.

40-54. (Canceled)

55. (New) An ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a carriage configured and positioned to scan said print head, and wherein the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed during scanning of said print head.

56. (New) An ink jet printing apparatus capable of performing a preliminary ejecting operation that does not contribute to printing, said apparatus comprising:

a print head having an ejecting portion;

wherein a first preliminary ejecting operation and a second preliminary ejecting operation are performed,

the first preliminary ejecting operation being performed on a print medium lying in a position facing said print head, wherein an ejection is performed through said ejecting portion of substantially only one or two ink droplets, selectively, in one preliminary ejecting operation, and

the second preliminary ejecting operation, in which an ejection amount of the second preliminary ejecting operation in one preliminary ejecting operation is greater than that of the first preliminary ejecting operation, being performed on an object other than the print medium.

57. (New) An ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 56, further comprising a carriage configured and positioned to scan said print head, and wherein the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed during scanning of said print head.

58. (New) An ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 56, wherein the second preliminary ejecting operation is performed at the start of a printing operation and the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed during the printing operation on the printing medium.



59. (New) An ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 56, wherein the number of ejected ink droplets of the second preliminary ejecting operation in one preliminary ejecting operation is greater than that of the first preliminary ejecting operation.

60. (New) An ink jet printing apparatus according to claim 56, wherein the first preliminary ejecting operation is performed at predetermined time intervals.